

Minutes

Cabinet



30th November 2015

These minutes principally record decisions taken and, where appropriate, the reasons for the decisions. A webcast of the meeting is available at www.braintree.gov.uk.

Present:

Portfolio	Cabinet Member	Present
Leader of the Council	Councillor G Butland (Chairman)	Yes
Deputy Leader of the Council	Councillor Mrs W Schmitt	Yes
Environment and Place	Councillor R Mitchell	Yes
Planning and Housing	Councillor Lady Newton	Yes
	Councillor Mrs L Bowers-Flint	Yes
Economic Development	Councillor T Cunningham	Yes
Health and Communities	Councillor Mrs J Beavis	Yes
	Councillor P Tattersley	Yes
Finance and Performance	Councillor D Bebb	Yes
Corporate Services and Asset Management	Councillor J McKee	Yes

Also present as invitees of the Leader:

Councillor Abbott, Green Party

Councillor Mann, Leader of the Labour Group

Councillor Siddall, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Councillors Hensman, Ramage, Rose and Schwier were also in attendance.

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Mrs Pell, Leader of Halstead Residents Association.

38 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

INFORMATION: The following interests were declared:

- Councillor J Abbott declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 6b - 'Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2016-17 to 2019-20 Update' as an elected Member of Rivenhall Parish Council and Essex County Council.
- Councillor Mrs J Beavis declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 6b - 'Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2016-17 to 2019-20 Update' as a Director of the Museum Trust.

- Councillor G Butland declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 6b - 'Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2016-17 to 2019-20 Update' as an elected Member of Great Notley Parish Council and Essex County Council.
- Councillor T Cunningham declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 6b – 'Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2016-17 to 2019-20 Update' as an elected Member of Great Notley Parish Council.
- Councillor J McKee declared non-pecuniary interests in Agenda Items 6a – 'Second Quarter Performance Management Report 2015-16' and 6b – 'Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2016-17 to 2019-20 Update' as a Director of Ignite Business Enterprise and as Chairman of Trustees for the Museum Trust.
- Councillor Lady Newton declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 6b - 'Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2016-17 to 2019-20 Update' as an elected Member of Essex County Council.
- Councillor C Siddall declared a non-pecuniary interest in Agenda Item 6a - 'Second Quarter Performance Management Report 2015-16' as a Director of Ignite Business Enterprise and as a Director of Warner Textile Limited.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct, Members remained in the meeting for each Item, unless stated otherwise, and took part in the debate and decision thereon.

39 **QUESTION TIME**

INFORMATION: There were no statements made, or questions asked.

40 **MINUTES**

DECISION: That the Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 28th September 2015 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

41 **LEADER'S UPDATE**

The Leader of the Council had nothing to report.

42 **UPDATE ON GREATER ESSEX DEVOLUTION**

INFORMATION: Members were informed that there was currently a lot of work taking place under the key work streams, Fiscal, Economic Growth, Connectivity and Infrastructure, New Homes and Communities, Employability and Skills, Governance, and Communication. A copy of the letter that had been received from the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government had been previously circulated to Members along with a copy of the Greater Essex Devolution newsletter. Members were advised that on 3rd December 2015 there would be a Leaders' Meeting to discuss further the potential bid.

It was reported that the representatives engaged in the work stream of New Homes and Communities had recently met with a number of developers (large and small) to discuss achieving the quality of development that was expected. Councillor Spence, Cabinet Member for Finance, Essex County Council, had also been in attendance.

Councillor Spence had agreed to look at whether Essex County Council may be able to forward fund some of the infrastructure using capital to do so. This proposal had been well received by developers and it may enable homes to be built quicker than originally anticipated.

DECISION: That Cabinet Members note the progress of the devolution programme to date.

REASON FOR DECISION: For Cabinet to be updated on the work to develop a devolution deal for Greater Essex.

43

SECOND QUARTER PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT REPORT 2015-16

INFORMATION: It was reported that an overall positive variance was forecast for the year of £738,000 slightly less than 5% against the budget of £15.624 million, this was mainly as a direct result of income. Income was projected to be overachieved by £781,000, as a result of the increase of development control income. The target for the year for incoming revenue had already been met, and it was expected to see a profit of around £428,000 from development control income. Trade waste was expected to be up by £49,000, car parks up by £65,000, property rent £75,000, land charges £74,000 and an increased amount was expected from the Council Tax sharing arrangement with major preceptors of around £130,000. This was partially offset by a predicted net shortfall of around £96,000, with the underspend on salary budgets being insufficient to cover the corporate deficiency targets.

Council Tax collection rate was now on target and had achieved around 69.75% collected for the year compared to 68.73% for the previous year with the target for the whole year at 98%. The amount collected was £52.96 million.

The business rates collection rate was also well on target at 69.17% collected for the year to the end of October, compared to 67.67% for the previous year with an overall target of 98.5%. The total amount collected was £30.09 million.

At the end of September 2015, seven projects had been completed with 32 on track to meet their target deadlines and the majority of the remaining projects were on track and progressing well. One project had an amber status in respect of delivering 75 new business start-ups in conjunction with Ignite Business Enterprise due to resource issues restricting delivery and support.

At the end of the second quarter, nine performance indicators had met their target and seven had not met their target. Four of the seven had missed their target by less than 5% and three had missed their target by more than 5%. Performance had slightly improved for the second quarter and although not all performance indicators had met their target they were being closely monitored. Performance was expected to improve over the year as the Council strives to deliver its corporate objectives whilst focusing resources to maximise the benefits for communities and businesses in the months ahead.

A question was raised at the meeting and subsequently Members were informed that out of the 50 fast food outlets approached in respect of the take away healthy eating project only one fast food establishment had declared an interest in the project.

DECISION: That Cabinet Members note and endorse the report.

REASON FOR DECISION: To inform the Cabinet of the performance of the Council.

44

MEDIUM-TERM FINANCIAL STRATEGY 2016-17 TO 2019-20 UPDATE

INFORMATION: Consideration was given to an update report on the Medium-Term Financial Strategy 2016/17 to 2019/20. At its meeting on 28th September 2015, Cabinet had received an update on the Council's Financial Profile which had revealed a shortfall on the revenue account over the next three years of £2.24million based on anticipated reductions in Government funding. Cabinet had also agreed to consult on a number of potential changes to the Council's Council Tax Support scheme for 2016/17 and in principle had agreed to join an Essex Business Rates Pool for 2016/17.

The Council was currently awaiting confirmation from Government of its funding settlement. In anticipation of this the Council had made provision for a reduction of 40%, amounting to £2.29 million over the four year period to 2019/20. It was anticipated that the Council's Revenue Support Grant would reduce to almost zero by 2019/20.

A review of the Council's financial position for the current year showed a predicted positive variance of £738,000. This was due principally to additional income of £781,000 offset partially by an adverse variance on expenditure budgets of £43,000.

Members were advised that a number of proposals for savings which had been identified would have an impact on residents, customers, or local organisations. These would be subject to appropriate consultation during December/January. Members were advised that the proposed 10% reduction in the grant to the Braintree District Museum Service was part of a long term process to reduce the liability on the tax payer by having increasing income from commercial services. A number of savings had been identified which would not have an adverse impact on residents, or customers and these had therefore been agreed by the Council's Management. The total values of these savings across the years were: £403,450 in 2016/17; £6,350 in 2017/18; and £1,750 in 2018/19.

The updated financial profile anticipated an addition to balances of £514,446 for 2016/17; a shortfall of £672,937 for 2017/18; a shortfall of £303,023 in 2018/19; and a shortfall of £397,884 in 2019/20.

Reference was made to the Local Council Tax Support scheme which had been introduced from 1st April 2013. The main principle underlying the scheme was that all working age claimants would be liable for 20% of their local Council Tax. For the coming financial year, it was estimated that there would be a shortfall on the fund of £201,000. It was proposed that the following changes should be made to the scheme for 2016/17 by increasing the minimum liability that working age claimants have to pay to 24%; increasing the deduction for non-dependants in the household to £20 per week (from £10 per week); introducing a minimum level of income for claimants who are self-employed, the level to be the National Living Wage; removing the Family Premium for new claims after 1st May 2016; and reducing the amount of time a claim can be backdated from three months to one month. Members were informed that further proposals for changes to the scheme had been announced in the Chancellor's

Autumn Statement. In discussing this proposal an amendment was put forward by Councillor Lady Newton, Cabinet Member for Planning and Housing, that the deduction for non-dependants in the household be retained at £10 per week rather than increased to £20.

It was reported that further information was awaited from the Government with regards to the New Homes Bonus (NHB) and whether the term for NHB payable on a single house should be reduced from six years to four.

It was noted that discussions were taking place with Greenfields Community Housing Ltd about the Community and Housing Investment Partnership (CHIP) fund and whether the balance of the fund is split between Braintree District Council and Greenfields Community Housing Ltd. The Council's share would be in the region of £2.5 million. It was noted that discussions are ongoing.

DECISION:

1. Cabinet recommends to Full Council to agree:
The Braintree District Council's Local Council Tax Support scheme for 2016/17, as detailed on the Council's website, subject to Councillor Lady Newton's amendment:
http://www.braintree.gov.uk/info/200302/benefits/367/housing_benefit_and_council_tax_support

and
2. Cabinet agreed that:
The budget for 2016/17 as presented in the report and the updated Financial Profile contained in Appendix A to the report constitute the initial budget proposals and that views be sought as appropriate.

REASON FOR DECISION: To recommend to Council to agree the Local Council Tax Support scheme for the Braintree District from 1st April 2016.

45 **BRAINTREE TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION SCHEME DEVELOPMENT AND FINANCIAL PROPOSALS**

INFORMATION: Members were reminded that this Item was linked to Item 12 in the Private Session of the Agenda, and that if any Member wished to refer to the private information contained within the report for that Item, it would be necessary for the meeting to be moved into Private Session.

In the circumstances, it was moved, seconded and agreed:-

DECISION: That, under Section 100(A)(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting if it is necessary to discuss Item 12 of the Agenda and from the private report, on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 2 of Schedule 12 of the Act.

Both Agenda Items were taken together to enable consideration of all issues. It was not necessary for the meeting to be moved into Private Session.

INFORMATION: Members were provided with details of the latest scheme proposals which were a variation to the original outline scheme. Members considered the change from a retail-led scheme to a Doctors' Surgery/restaurant led scheme and obtained agreement in principle to move forward with the new scheme proposals. A scheme of delegation had also been proposed to enable the proposed scheme to progress without any further delay.

Members noted that the date by which Henry Boot Developments Limited would prepare and submit the Specification and the Scheme Drawings in accordance with the terms of the Development Agreement had been extended to 31st December 2015. This time extension had been approved by Councillor Tom Cunningham under Delegated Authority to enable the proposed scheme to progress without any further delay.

DECISION (Public Report):

1. That Members approve in principle a revised redevelopment scheme on the Braintree Town Centre regeneration site comprising a Doctors' Surgery/Pharmacy, restaurants/café, public car parking, a bus interchange and public realm.
2. That powers be delegated to the Director of Sustainable Development in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development to agree the final detailed scheme design and specification and final agreed financial arrangements as set out in the Private Report, provided that any changes are within the parameters as set out in the Private Report.

DECISION (Private Report):

1. That Members approve in principle a revised redevelopment scheme on the Braintree Town Centre regeneration site comprising a Doctors' Surgery/Pharmacy, restaurants/café, public car parking, a bus interchange and public realm.
2. That powers be delegated to the Director of Sustainable Development in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development to agree the final detailed scheme design and specification and final agreed financial arrangements, provided that any changes are within the parameters as set out in the report.

REASON FOR DECISION: To agree in principle the development proposals and financial arrangements for the Braintree Town Centre regeneration site to enable the project to move forward and trigger the development provisions contained within the Development Agreement.

46 **REFERENCES FROM COUNCIL/COMMITTEES/GROUPS**

INFORMATION: None had been received.

47 **MINUTES FROM CABINET SUB-GROUPS – DEVELOPING DEMOCRACY GROUP
- 6TH OCTOBER 2015 AND LOCAL PLAN SUB-COMMITTEE - 11TH NOVEMBER
2015**

DECISION: That the Minutes of the meetings of the Developing Democracy Group held on 6th October 2015 and the Local Plan Sub-Committee held on 11th November 2015 be noted.

48 **CABINET MEMBER DECISIONS MADE UNDER DELEGATED POWERS**

DECISION: That the delegated decisions set out in the report be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION: The reasons for each decision can be found in the individual delegated decisions.

The meeting commenced at 7.15pm and closed at 8.41pm.

G BUTLAND
(Leader)